

the manor of Tortworth, in Gloucestershire, where it stands, and is mentioned as such by Evelyn, in his *SILVA*, b. III. c. 3. At the time that it was thus conspicuous for its magnitude and vigour, we may reasonably suppose it to have been in its prime; if, therefore, we pay any regard to the received opinion which is applied to the Chesnut, equally with the Oak, that it is three hundred years in coming to perfection, this calculation takes us back to the beginning of the reign of Egbert, in the year 800, for the commencement of the existence of the Tortworth Chesnut. Since that epoch above a thousand years have rolled over its yet green head. How is it possible, bearing this reflection in our minds, to look upon its gigantic trunk, and widely-spreading arms, without feelings of reverence! How many, not merely generations of men, but whole nations, have been swept from the face of the earth, whilst, winter after winter, it has defied the howling blasts with its bare branches, and spring after spring put forth its leaves again, a grateful shelter from the summer suns! Its tranquil existence, unlike that of the human race, stained by no guilt, chequered by no vicissitudes, is thus perpetually renewing itself; and, if we judge from the luxuriance of its foliage, and the vigour of the branches which encircle the parent stem in wild profusion, may be prolonged for as many more centuries as it has already stood. Nor is it solitary in its old age. Its progeny rises around it, and its venerable roots are nearly hidden by the lighter saplings and bushes that have sought the protection of its boughs, making it appear a grove in itself—a fit residence for some sylvan deity, and realising Cowley's animated apostrophe:

"Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good!
Hail, ye plebeian underwood,
Where the poetic birds rejoice,
And for their quiet nests and plentiful food
Pay with their grateful voice.

"Here Nature does a house for me erect,—
Nature, the wisest architect,
Who those fond artists does despise

That can the fair and living trees neglect,
Yet the dead timber prize.

"Here let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,
Hear the soft winds above me flying,
With all their wanton boughs dispute,
And the more tuneful birds to both replying,
Nor be myself too mute."

It is only on approaching within the very limits overshadowed by its spreading branches, that the size of this majestic tree can be duly estimated; but when its full proportions are fairly viewed on all sides, it strikes the beholder with feelings of wonder and admiration, sufficient to produce conviction that the accounts which travellers have given of the monstrous bulk of the famous Chesnut on Mount Etna have not exceeded the truth.

When we consider how beautiful and interesting an object a magnificent tree is in itself, how proud an ornament it forms to the spot whereon it flourishes—an ornament not to be equalled by any edifice reared by human hands; how incontestable a witness it stands to the ancient riches or honours of those on whose estates it may for ages have been cherished and preserved; it might be imagined, that such as are fortunate enough to possess any remarkable treasures of this description in their parks or forests, would at least be as studious to retain them, as to amass other curiosities of nature or of art, which may be of comparatively short duration: yet the Tortworth Chesnut does not appear to have been treated with the respect due to its age and magnitude, or the care desirable for its continuance. It is only within a few years that it has been relieved from the pressure of three walls, in the angle of which it stood, and which must have greatly injured the spreading of its roots. The axe which would have been commendably employed in clearing the approach to it of brambles and briars, has, on the contrary, been barbarously, though not recently, applied to the tree itself; which has been wantonly despoiled of several large limbs on the north-east side, apparently many years ago: it is in consequence much decayed on that side, whilst on the others it is still sound. The Tortworth Chesnut, in 1766, measured fifty feet in circumference, at five feet from the ground. The body is ten feet in height, to the fork, where it divides into three limbs, one of which, at the period already mentioned, measured twenty-eight feet and a half in girth, at the distance of five feet from the parent stem. The solid contents, according to the customary method of measuring timber, are one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five feet; but its true geometrical contents must be much more.

PLATE XXX.—THE SYCAMORE AND LIME IN COBHAM PARK.

THE Sycamore is a species of the Maple: in favourable situations it attains to a considerable stature, and will remain a long time in a state of perfection. Evelyn accuses it of contaminating the walks, wherein it may be planted, with its leaves, which, like those of the Ash, fall early, and putrefy with the first moisture of